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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 000548

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/08/2027  
TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [PGOV](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: SPECIAL ENVOY FOR COUNTERING THE PKK RALSTON  
DISCUSSES REALISTIC STEPS

REF: A. ANKARA 219 AND PREVIOUS

[1](#)B. ANKARA 465

Classified By: Ambassador Wilson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (S/NF) Summary: Turkey will review U.S. suggestions for deliverables on the PKK, GOT Special Envoy Baser told U.S. Special Envoy Ralston March 8. Turkey remains concerned that the PKK maintains a potentially intimidating presence in the Makhmour refugee camp, but will proceed with negotiations on closure. Baser asked for: enhanced efforts to ensure U.S. forces do not meet with PKK and its affiliates in Iraq; discussion of the PKK at the March 10 "neighbors-plus" meeting in Baghdad; and enhanced intelligence sharing. End summary.

Deliverables  
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[1](#)2. (S/NF) Accompanied by the Ambassador, U.S. Special Envoy for Countering the PKK, Gen. (r) Joseph Ralston, met his counterpart, GEN (r) Edip Baser, in Istanbul on March 8. Baser was accompanied by MFA Director General for Security Affairs (S/CT-equivalent) Hayati Guven and staff. Baser reviewed the non-paper the Turkish Embassy in Washington provided to Gen. Ralston Feb. 21 (full text in para. 12). He requested that both sides consider conveying the paper to the GOI, followed by a trilateral meeting one to two weeks later. Baser touched on the recent political debate in Turkey on official contacts with the Iraqi Kurds (ref b), asserting that as Iraqi Kurdish rhetoric becomes increasingly "provocative and maximalist," the narrower their options become.

[1](#)3. (S/NF) Ralston and Baser agreed that any discussion of the second item (capture and extradition of PKK leaders) take place in separate channels. On Turkey's request for the GOI to issue an explicit statement condemning the PKK and to sign a Turkey-Iraq counterterrorism agreement, Ralston suggested that attempting to extract a new GOI statement would be unlikely to succeed and in any event would have minimal practical impact. A better approach might be to request the

GOI to operationalize its statement from Sept. 2006, for example by issuing directives banning all trade (or certain trade, such as in arms) with the PKK.

14. (S/NF) Baser preferred to "insist" upon an explicit GOI statement. He believed such a statement was not just words, but would demonstrate the GOI's commitment to deal with the issue. Guven added that he would have thought that a statement would have been the easiest step for the Iraqis. Nevertheless, Baser said the GOT would consider Ralston's proposal.

15. (S/NF) On closure of PKK camps along the Iraq-Turkey border, Ralston proposed that Turkey select the one camp it considers the most important and ask the GOI to consider closing it. It has thus far proven unrealistic to demand the Iraqis close every camp; to request this again will only produce the same result: no action. Asking for one camp -- complete with detailed information on its location and activities -- may be something Iraq could handle and would demonstrate its goodwill. Perhaps afterward, Turkish and Iraqi border forces could carry out joint patrols to ensure the camp remains closed. Ralston emphasized that the U.S. understands closing only one camp is not sufficient, but we should seek results that could be duplicated and set a precedent. Baser agreed to provide details on one or several PKK camps for closure in order of Turkish priority. He asked that the U.S. put its proposals for deliverables in written form; Ralston agreed to this.

Makhmour Camp

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16. (S/NF) MFA's Guven reported on March 5 UNHCR-Turkey-Iraq discussions on the Makhmour refugee camp in northern Iraq. While the three sides reached almost complete agreement on the text of the Tripartite Agreement on voluntary repatriation to Turkey, they also concluded that UNHCR must draft a side agreement covering other options for durable solutions for refugees who do not wish to return. The three will discuss both texts in a mid-April meeting in Geneva.

17. (S/NF) Guven complained that U.S. and UN assertions that PKK elements have been removed from the camp are false. Guven said Turkish intelligence has assessed that the "mayor" of the camp and 31 of the 43 elected camp council members are PKK members, many of whom even use code names. He also reported a Feb. 12-15 hunger strike at Makhmour to protest Abdullah Ocalan's treatment in prison. This and other evidence, Guven claimed, constitute proof that the camp's residents will be unable to make a free choice on whether or not they wish to return to Turkey. Turkey is also waiting for the Iraqis to spell out explicitly their plans for the camp after closure to ensure the PKK does not re-enter and use its facilities. PKK exclusion should be clear before Turkey can sign the Tripartite Agreement.

18. (S/NF) Gen. Ralston congratulated Guven for making good progress on the text of the Tripartite Agreement. While the issue of the mayor and certain sentiments in the camp are of concern, he strongly urged that Turkey not lose sight of the main goal: closure of the camp. Ambassador added that UNHCR personnel use certain established procedures to ensure that their survey of the refugees' desires is done confidentially and in safety. Baser and Guven agreed after some discussion that Turkey remains committed to pushing forward on closure, though its concerns remain. Baser also indicated that expedited parliamentary approval of a finalized Tripartite Agreement may be possible.

Additional Turkish Requests

19. (S/NF) Baser requested the U.S. explicitly instruct all

its field elements in Iraq not to have contacts with the PKK and all related groups. Baser noted the "neighbors-plus" subministerial meeting in Baghdad March 10, and suggested the PKK be part of the discussion. Finally, he asked for enhanced U.S.-Turkey intelligence cooperation on PKK.

¶10. (S/NF) On the issue of contact with the PKK, Gen. Ralston reiterated the USG's firm stance that the PKK is a terrorist organization and we do not engage with it. Some units in Iraq have occasionally met in error with PKK-affiliated groups, and we are working hard to ensure this does not occur. Ralston has spoken about this issue with MNF-I Commander GEN Petraeus, who has expressed an interest in meeting with the senior Turkish command. This would be a good opportunity to reinforce this message.

¶11. (S/NF) On the March 10 Baghdad meeting, Ambassador noted that it will be closely followed by at least one more meeting at the ministerial level. We have recommended to the GOI that security be an agenda item, but the delegations will have much to cover. While the participants in Baghdad may not have the opportunity to discuss the PKK given other pressing security issues within Iraq, it could be a topic for a follow-on meeting. Ambassador also summarized U.S.-Turkey intelligence cooperation on the PKK.

¶12. (S/REL TU) Text of Turkish non-paper handed to Gen. Ralston on Feb. 21

BEGIN TEXT

February 21, 2007

MEASURES WITH PRIORITY TO BE ADOPTED FOR COUNTERING THE PKK/

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#### KONGRA-GEL ACTIVITIES IN NORTHERN IRAQ

In accordance with the common understanding reached between the Special Envoys on Countering the PKK terrorist organization, during the meetings in Ankara on 30 January 2007, the Turkish authorities propose the following measures to be adopted by the Special Envoys in their next meeting, with a view to enhancing cooperation between Turkey, US and Iraq to counter the PKK/KONGRA-GEL activities in northern Iraq.

a. Proclamation of the PKK/KONGRA-GEL as a terrorist organization by the Iraq Government and declaration of intent with a view to concluding the draft Agreement on Combating Terrorism submitted to the Iraq Government, in February 2006.

b. Capturing and extradition to Turkey of the PKK leaders sheltered in northern Iraq, in particular Murat Karayilan, Duran Kalkan, Mustafa Karasu and Cemil Bayik about whom detailed information was submitted to the Iraqi authorities together with the copies of INTERPOL notices.

c. Elimination of PKK/KONGRA-GEL camps starting with those located in Sinath-Haftanin region, in the direction from West to the East along the areas adjacent to the Turkish-Iraqi border followed by joint verification.

END TEXT

¶13. (U) Gen. Ralston did not have an opportunity to clear this message before departing Istanbul.

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WILSON